



Australian Fossil Mammal Sites - Riversleigh World Heritage Area

Advisory Committee Meeting Communiqué July 2019

1. The Riversleigh Community and Scientific Advisory Committee (RCSAC) welcomes the opportunity to respond and offer advice to the Minister to support World Heritage obligations for the Riversleigh section of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (AFMS) (identification, presentation, conservation, protection and management).
2. The Committee's second meeting for 2019 and the final for the Committee's term was held at Adel's Grove, far Northwest Queensland on 1 July and was attended by nine of twelve Committee members. Also in attendance were Professor John Long, Chair of the Naracoorte Interagency Reference Group; Mr Matt Bron, Director Southern and Outback Country, Tourism and Events Queensland; Ms Claire Grant, Mr Anthony Contarino, Ms Sarah Jess and Ms Marnie Augusteyn, QPWS; together with Executive Officer Ms Ellen Thyer and Departmental observers Ms Angela Siggery, Ms Lyn Wallace, Mr Tim Moore and Mr Adam Musial.
3. The Committee noted the letter from the Minister expressing her apologies for not being able to attend the celebrations for the 25th Anniversary of Riversleigh's World Heritage listing, and looked forward to welcoming Deputy Director-General Mr Ben Klaassen as the Minister's representative. The Committee very much appreciated the Minister's video message acknowledging the Waanyi Peoples continuing connection to country, the work done by Committee members, tourism bodies, researchers and local councils over the last 25 years, and the planned works to ensure future generations can continue to visit and appreciate this iconic destination.
4. The Committee was very pleased to learn that the Department, through Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, was progressing the formalisation of an updated agreement with the Lawn Hill Riversleigh Pastoral Holding Company (LHRPHC) to continue to allow public access across the LHRPHC property to D Site. An update of the agreement is necessary, since it has been 10 years since the previous agreement was signed. The positive progress in renegotiation of the access arrangements is an indication of the good will between the negotiating parties. The Committee was also very pleased to learn that negotiations have resumed between the LHRPHC and a commercial tour operator to allow access across LHRPHC property to provide guided tours of the significantly important Bitesantennary Valley fossil sites. The Committee was advised that the LHRPHC has requested funding as a condition of the commercial tour access agreement for a full-time equivalent to enable Waanyi guides to accompany commercial tours.
5. The Committee congratulated the World Heritage Unit (WHU) on their production of a suite of educational and promotional materials which have all been approved by the Waanyi Peoples, and noted that planning

had commenced on the development of a downloadable audioguide to improve interpretation at D Site. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to the QPWS/WHU team that had developed new interpretative signage for the self-guided walking track at D Site. All materials had a consistent style evocative of the Riversleigh landscape, were scientifically accurate and very easy to read.

6. The Committee was pleased to learn that the new Partnerships Branch in the Department was now established and that a framework has been developed to reframe relationships with First Nations peoples. Priorities for the new Committee will be to cultivate deeper associations with Waanyi Elders and community members, embedded in a new Strategic Management Plan.
7. The Committee noted that the Governance Review of Queensland's terrestrial World Heritage Areas had been completed and that there were no recommendations for change to the Riversleigh Community and Scientific Advisory Committee's broad stakeholder base or operations. The Committee was supportive of a less cumbersome and more informative name, with the preference being 'Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee'.
8. The Committee was delighted that Professor John Long, Chair of the Naracoorte Interagency Reference Group, was able to attend both the Committee meeting and the 25th Anniversary celebrations the following day. Together Naracoorte and Riversleigh provide an extraordinary picture of the key stages of evolution of Australia's mammals from 30 million years ago to the present, recognised through their serial listing as the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites. Naracoorte's fossils date from 530,000 years ago and are preserved in limestone caves which are significant tourist attractions. Visitation increases annually and is now in excess of 50,000 a year. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the discovery of fossils in the cave system that had been explored, in part, since the nineteenth century. Celebrations to mark both these anniversaries are being planned for the latter part of 2019.
9. The Committee congratulated the Queensland Museum on the completion of the audit of all fossil specimens from the Riversleigh World Heritage Area described to date in the scientific literature. Some 3,676 specimens have been described, representing an outstanding research effort over more than four decades. The current physical location of each of these specimens must now be identified and a schedule developed for the ultimate repatriation of each specimen from the University of New South Wales to the Queensland Museum, the legislated custodian of such materials, to ensure compliance with Queensland Government Audit Office requirements.
10. The Committee was pleased to learn that tenders had closed and were being evaluated for the design and construction of the upgrade of the Riversleigh Fossil Centre in Mount Isa. These works will be jointly funded by the Mount Isa City Council and the Queensland Government's Outback Tourism Infrastructure fund.
11. The Committee was delighted to receive a brief report from Mr Matt Bron (Tourism and Events Queensland) on the recent tour of significant fossil sites in the United States and Canada, including two World Heritage sites, by ten Queensland dinosaur/fossil tourism operators. This initiative by TEQ provided substantial opportunities for operators to observe and study best practice examples of science interpretation and tourism operations that should result in enhanced collaboration and presentation of Queensland rich fossil experiences. Matt Bron was congratulated for initiating, planning and leading the tour and should be invited by the next Committee to provide a more comprehensive report of key findings.
12. The Committee was briefed on the following day's program to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the listing of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites on the World Heritage register, and tasks and responsibilities were assigned to different members to support the activities. The Committee congratulated Mr Tim Moore and Ms Ellen Thyer for their leadership and coordination of the Anniversary program.

The meeting then adjourned to enable members to travel to D Site to finalise logistics.

25th Anniversary Celebrations

Departmental staff will provide a more detailed report. Highlights included:

- 1. Riversleigh Fossil Kits presented on the Deck at Adel's Grove.**
Dr Andrew Rozefelds and Dr Graeme Potter presented the Queensland Museum Fossil Kits on two afternoons to guests at Adel's Grove. The opportunity to see actual fossils from the World Heritage Area and to learn how museums replicate specimens for display and educational purposes was very much appreciated by many dozens of guests.
- 2. Science on the Deck with Professors Michael Archer and John Long.**
The presentations on the significance of the fossils at both Riversleigh and Naracoorte was prefaced by the presentation of the Minister's video message. More than 100 guests were in attendance.
- 3. Acknowledgement of RCSAC members.**
Committee members were surprised and delighted at the presentations made by DDG Ben Klaassen on behalf of the Department to each member in recognition of their contributions to RCSAC during their three-year term (ending on 6 October 2019).
- 4. 25th Anniversary Celebration at D Site.**
A very special commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the listing of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites on the World Heritage register was held at D Site on the afternoon of 2 July 2019. Approximately 90 guests were in attendance at this remote location. A special highlight was the most impressive presentation by the Doomadgee Dancers to commence proceedings. This is a recently formed group of mainly young Doomadgee residents who enthralled with their very professional and enthusiastic dances of local stories including one with a contemporary twist.
Formalities included addresses by DDG Ben Klaassen on behalf of the Minister, RCSAC Chair Dr Graeme Potter, Doomadgee Dancers organiser Mr Elijah Douglas and Ms Cecelia Douglas and Mayors Cr Ernie Camp (Burke Shire) and Cr Joyce McCulloch (Mount Isa City). Redevelopment concepts for visitor infrastructure at D Site were unveiled together with the new walking track interpretative signage and marketing collateral. Mr Tim Moore (WHU) was an excellent MC.

Terrible fire at Adel's Grove

As this communique was being prepared, news was received of a terrible fire at Adel's Grove in the early hours of 9 July that completely destroyed the reception area, kitchen and associated amenities including the Deck. QPWS staff, among other first response units, attended the scene. Thankfully no one was injured. Adel's Grove has been the accommodation venue for RCSAC since its inception, and the owners and staff have provided outstanding support as well as interpretation of the World Heritage Area. A temporary reception area has been established to enable Adel's Grove to continue to trade during this busy holiday and tourism season.

Dr Graeme Potter
Chair, Riversleigh Community and Scientific Advisory Committee
July 2019